

CDF NEWS RELEASE

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection



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Martin Mars Used for First Time in California Firefighting

SACRAMENTO--CDF has contracted with a private Canadian company, Forestry Flying Tankers (www.martinmars.com), for the temporary use of a Martin Mars amphibious air tanker. A CDF tactical team composed of three air attack officers has been assigned as information, liaison, and operations managers for the duration of its assignment. The CDF information contact for the Mars is Battalion Chief Kate Dargan at 530-277-2308.

The Mars is currently located at New Melones Reservoir outside of Angels Camp. It is the 1946 Hawaii Martin Mars WWII aircraft, one of two left in the world. It is amphibious only, and operates by scooping water out of large lakes and reservoirs. The Mars is normally assigned to firefighting duty in British Columbia, Canada, where it has operated continuously since 1959 with a blemish-free safety record for the past 40 years.

The Mars can hold up to 7,200-gallons of water allowing for two separate drops. It carries 150 gallons of Class A foam that may be mixed with the water on demand. It requires a large reservoir with approximately 5 miles of approach/water/departure area, and fills its tanks by skimming the water at 70 knots. The scoops are 7-inch diameter forward-facing 'straws' that fill the aircraft tanks in 30 seconds. The tanker then flies and operates similar to other fixed wing airtankers by flying the same traffic patterns and dropping on wildfires. Its drop pattern at full load is roughly 200 feet by 1000 feet. The Mars flies with a crew of four and can fly up to 7 hours before refueling. Its dimensions are 120' long, almost 50' high, with a 200' wingspan. It is roughly the size of a 747, and cruises at 190 mph.

CDF air attack officers are currently evaluating its safety and effectiveness for use in

the California firefighting environment and will make recommendations for its specific deployment by August 1. Planning for both public and firefighter safety and safe air operations is the top priority. CDF leased the Mars after new FAA regulations forced the temporary grounding of its helicopter fleet. Current anticipated use is one week, although fire situation and aircraft evaluation may change that.

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